

FROM TREE GROVES TO TRACT HOMES

Longtime Valleyites Reminisce

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At one time, Walter Hurley used to walk up and down Citrus Avenue and pass hitching posts and one-story brick buildings.

Many of those same buildings have remained, and so has Walter Hurley.

A Covina resident since his toddler years in 1908, Hurley has seen the San Gabriel Valley change from a plethora of orange groves into a sprawling suburbia.

From the home he and his wife Nina built 27 years ago on Lyman Avenue, the couple shared with The Tribune how they grew with the valley.

Hurley's family came from Pennsylvania and opened W. L. Hurley Hardware on the corner of Citrus Avenue and College Street.

His father also owned a grove in Glendora. Hurley recalls days filled with orange fights and nights spent lighting smudge pots to protect the fruit from frost. He says that as a child he was paid \$1 an hour for the chore.

"That was considered quite good pay," he muses.

The veteran Covinan quips about some of the changes he's witnessed.

In what is now West Covina, ranchers used to raise walnuts, he says, "Now they're raising kids down there, I don't know which is more profitable."

"There are so many different types of people now, before there were just ranchers," Mrs. Hurley adds, "Everyone knew everyone else."

Mrs. Hurley was born in Mexico. Her parents moved to Baldwin Park in 1915, and later to Covina.

Both Valleyites attended the old Covina High School on the corner of Citrus and Puente avenues. At the time they attended, Mrs. Hurley estimates the average enrollment to have been around 650, including students from Baldwin Park, West Covina, Lark Ellen and Charter Oak.

Mrs. Hurley recalls sitting out in front of her house on College Street and waiting to watch that lanky young son of a hardware store owner pass by.

She also remembers the Warner and Whitsel & Co. grocery and general store a few doors down from the hardware store.

She says in those days the store used to serve up hot dogs and sodas (a much rarer treat in those days, she adds) for the high schoolers who would stop in.

Mrs. Hurley chuckled. "In those days they delivered

dition, the Pacific Electric "red cars" ran along Badillo for local jaunts.

Hurley boasts that his father was the second car owner in Covina, the proud owner of a soft-topped Maxwell.

The younger Hurley earned his real estate license in 1935. "I mostly sold orange groves...you couldn't hardly give them away (groves), you

Then World War II hit, and many things turned around. Hurley went to work buying parts for the Douglas Aircraft Company in Long Beach.

Asked whether he had ever expected this area to grow as it did, Hurley admits he had no idea. But the war ended and in came the crowds.

"People came out to California to wear short sleeves and still be warmer than they would be with all their clothes on back East," Hurley quips.

The Hurleys jumped on the bandwagon. The young real estate agent subdivided 10 acres of the family land in Glendora.

Except for a short stint as owner of an appliance firm, "The Covina Electric Store," Hurley worked in real estate until 1979.

When the Covina Valley Board of Realtors was formed, Hurley was a charter member and served on the board for six years. He is still an honorary member.

"When I first got my li-

'Used to Raise Walnuts Now ... Raising Kids'

groceries to the house," she says.

For fun, the young court-ing couple would drive to Alhambra to the roller skating rink or stop in at the soda parlor on Citrus Avenue.

At 10 to 15 cents a gallon for gasoline, one could afford to drive to Los Angeles for the evening to take in a picture show, or head to the beach for a day of fishing, Hurley says. In ad-

dition, he recalls. "In the '30s you couldn't sell anything."

Mrs. Hurley remembers a sign of the times. On the corner of Citrus Avenue she says, there stood a sign that read "A mile square and all there."

In 1939 the elder Hurley died and the brothers joined forces to run the store, renaming it Hurley Brothers Hardware.



Tribune Photo by Michael Goulding

IN THOSE DAYS — Walter Hurley, pictured with his wife Nina, remembers when Citrus Avenue was lined with hitch-

ing posts. The longtime residents shared some historical tidbits on what life in early Covina was like.